

# How-To Templates

## Sensory Kits

Individuals with autism frequently show sensory sensitivities. Some individuals may cover their ears at everyday sounds. Others may refuse to touch or eat certain things because of how they feel. Some individuals with autism may like to look at objects from odd angles. These behaviors suggest sensory sensitivity. Some individuals may also show odd links between senses, for example some individuals will gag when touching certain objects. You may also find that many individuals with ASD seek out sensory stimulation to calm themselves or reduce anxiety. By creating a sensory kit filled with sensory materials, you may enable individuals with autism spectrum disorders to meet their sensory needs, thus allowing them to feel less anxious and better able to focus on their daily tasks.

### To Make:

1. Review the sensory kit materials list and sensory considerations checklist for some ideas regarding items to include in a kit.
2. Determine which items would be appropriate and safe for the individuals using the kit. Remember that a sensory kit should contain several options, targeting each of the senses.
3. Create a box or bin with those items that are safe and appropriate to the individual.
4. Consider labeling the kit with a sign or picture so the individual can easily access materials as needed.

### To Use:

1. Place the kit in an easy to access area.
2. At pre-scheduled times, allow the individual to have access to the materials.
3. It is important NOT to allow the child access to the kit when s/he is distressed or engaged in inappropriate behaviors. Doing so will increase the individual's likelihood of continuing those behaviors as a way to continue gaining access to the kit.



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Also, check out...

How-To Video: Choice Board

How-To Template: Choice Board

Kid's Corner Series:  
Life with ASD Series  
Academia Series  
Strategies in Practice Series

View/download these and other templates at [www.HANDSinAutism.org/tools/HowToTemplates.html](http://www.HANDSinAutism.org/tools/HowToTemplates.html)

**Materials provided are *samples only!*  
They may need to be individualized to meet the particular needs of a person with an ASD!**



## Sensory Kit Materials List

Items in the sensory kit should be presented only with proper adult supervision.

**Tactile:** An individual may find comfort in tactile input if s/he explores items through touch or seeks out various textures to feel or mouth. Possible items:

- |                        |                  |                             |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| ◇ Vibrator/Bumble ball | ◇ Koosh Balls    | ◇ Bristle Blocks            |
| ◇ Feather Duster       | ◇ Texture Blocks | ◇ Vibrating Stuffed Animals |
| ◇ Fabric Samples       | ◇ Squeeze Balls  | ◇ Thera-Putty/Silly-Putty   |
| ◇ Pin Image            | ◇ Self-held Fan  | ◇ Play-dough                |

**Visual:** An individual may find comfort in visual input if s/he explores items closely with his/her eyes, watches visually stimulating items, or shakes items in front of his/her eyes. Possible items:

- |                    |                           |                |
|--------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| ◇ Spinning Tops    | ◇ Video Games (hand held) | ◇ Light Wands  |
| ◇ Theme Books      | ◇ Stacking Items          | ◇ Figurines    |
| ◇ Trains           | ◇ Hot Wheels              | ◇ Mirror       |
| ◇ Expanding Sphere | ◇ Timers with Gel Center  | ◇ Bounce Balls |
| ◇ Magna Doodle     | ◇ Slinky                  |                |

**Olfactory:** An individual may find comfort in olfactory input if s/he explores items through smell, smells items or people, or seeks various smells. Possible items:

- |                        |                            |                 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| ◇ Scented Bounce Balls | ◇ Scratch & Sniff Stickers | ◇ Scented Books |
| ◇ Scented Markers      | ◇ Scented Toys             |                 |

**Auditory:** An individual may find comfort in auditory input if s/he explores the world through sound, plays with or is drawn to items that make noise, is easily distracted by noises, or enjoys listening to music/noises. Possible items:

- |                  |                         |                      |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| ◇ Music          | ◇ Microphone            | ◇ Musical instrument |
| ◇ Headphones/CDs | ◇ Toys that Make Noises | ◇ Tape Recorder      |

**Gustatory:** An individual may find comfort in gustatory input if s/he explores items through taste, puts items in his/her mouth, or seeks out specific tastes or flavors (e.g., crunchy, salty, etc.). Check with the family before introducing any gustatory sensory items. Possible items:

- |                           |               |           |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| ◇ Fireball Cinnamon Candy | ◇ Sour Candy  | ◇ Suckers |
| ◇ Saltine Crackers        | ◇ Gummy Candy |           |

**Proprioceptive:** An individual may find comfort in proprioceptive input if he/she enjoys deep pressure sensations, engages in activities involving pushing or pulling, lifting, tight spaces, jumping, or hugging tightly. Possible items:

- |                  |              |                |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| ◇ Weighted Vest* | ◇ Body Sock* | ◇ Play Tunnel* |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|

**Vestibular:** An individual may find comfort in vestibular input if he/she enjoys movement or movement-related sensations. Possible items:

- |          |               |                         |
|----------|---------------|-------------------------|
| ◇ Swing* | ◇ Sit & Spin* | ◇ Jungle Gym Equipment* |
|----------|---------------|-------------------------|

\*May not fit in kit; may need to put in a picture to represent the choice

*Sensory Considerations Checklist*<sup>®</sup>

Individuals with autism often process sensory information differently than others in their environment. These sensory processing difficulties can lead to distractibility, anxiety, pain, and frustration. Lending predictability and a sense of control to these sensory issues can also be of benefit. This form will provide information useful to adapting the environment to better accommodate your child's sensory difficulties.

Sample sensory issues are noted below. Please check which items you have observed to be of concern to your child. If a certain item is missing, please include it at the end of that particular section.

**Auditory (Sounds)**

◇ Loud, unpredictable sounds:

- Fire alarms
- School bell
- Fireworks

◇ Ordinary/daily sounds:

- Toilet
- Vacuum
- Blow dryer
- Baby crying
- Singing or talking

◇ Subtle sounds:

- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Fans
- Vent noises
- Distant plane/train
- White noise

◇ Doesn't respond to:

- Sound of own name
- Most sounds

◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

◇ Responds to dislikes with:

- Hands over ears
- Yelling, screaming or crying
- Running away

◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Gustatory (Taste)**

◇ Tastes/eats non-food items

◇ Preference for:

- Carbohydrates
- Salty
- Sour
- Sweet
- Crunchy
- Pureed
- Certain temperature \_\_\_\_\_

◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

◇ Responds to dislikes with:

- Gagging
- Vomiting
- Yelling
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Olfactory (Smells)**

◇ Responds to subtle smells

◇ Investigates items by smelling

◇ Bothered by foul smells

◇ Bothered by everyday scents:

- Food cooking
- Perfume
- Soaps
- Hands/fingers

◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Propioretive (Pressure in Joints)**

- ◇ Seeks activities involving:
  - Pushing/pulling
  - Lifting
  - Tight spaces
  - Jumping
- ◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Grinds teeth
- ◇ Difficulty sitting up in a chair
- ◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ◇ Responds with:
  - Falling hard
  - Hugging
  - Breaking toys
  - Slamming doors
  - Stomping
  - Hitting
  - Playing rough
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Tactile (Touch)**

- ◇ Preference for textures \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Irritated by textures \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Dislikes bare feet
- ◇ Insists on having bare feet
- ◇ Dislikes light touch
- ◇ Avoids “messy” play
- ◇ Seeks “messy” play
- ◇ Irritated by having hair touched

- ◇ Dislikes having face washed
- ◇ Dislikes being tickled
- ◇ Strong tolerance to pain
- ◇ Insensitive to touch
- ◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Vestibular (Movement)**

- ◇ Negative reaction to movement
- ◇ Enjoys movement:
  - Swinging
  - Rocking
  - Spinning
- ◇ Exhibits poor balance
- ◇ Enjoys being upside down
- ◇ Fearful of not being upright
- ◇ Enjoys climbing
- ◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Visual (Sight)**

- ◇ Focus on parts of objects
- ◇ Bothered by visual distracters:
  - Fans
  - Lights
  - Mirrors
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Looks at items up close
- ◇ Looks at items at angles
- ◇ Difficulty focusing/tracking items
- ◇ Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Form Acknowledgement:* Christian Sarkine Autism Treatment Center, (2003). Adapted from: Parham, D.; LaCroix, J.; & Ecker, C. Evaluation of Sensory Processing (ESP) – Research Version 3. For questions or permission to use, copy, or distribute, please contact Naomi Swiezy, Ph.D., HSPP, Program Director, Christian Sarkine Autism Treatment Center, Program Director, HANDS in Autism Program, at [nswiezy@iupui.edu](mailto:nswiezy@iupui.edu).